

APPENDIX Q

LETTER FROM CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Memorandum

To: Mr. Paul D. Thayer
Executive Officer
California State Lands Commission
100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100 South
Sacramento, California 95825

Date: July 30, 2003

From: **Department of Fish and Game**

Subject: PRC 421 Remnant Structure Removal and Proposed Seabird Platform
Project Information Packet

The Department of Fish and Game (Department) personnel have reviewed your letter and the project information packet for the PRC-421 Remnant Structure Removal and Proposed Seabird Platform (dated May 15, 2003). The Department believes the Year 2003 project as described addresses the concerns we expressed in our letter May 28, 2002. It is our understanding that the State Lands Commission's (SLC) wishes to enter into a lease agreement with the Department for continued management of the site. We believe this is appropriate and we are willing to enter into such a lease agreement with the SLC.

The remnant structure is located on State tide and submerged lands oil and gas lease, PRC 421, and is located 2 miles west of Coal Oil Point, Santa Barbara County, California, approximately 400 to 900 feet from shore in 32 feet of water. The remnant structure consists of the remains of a pier and well service structure built in the early 1930s and is comprised of eight, 8-foot diameter steel-reinforced concrete columns connected with steel trusses which support the remnants of a wooden deck. The State lease specifies that the lessee remove all improvements to the area and restore the area.

Removal of the structure, the columns and all associated structures (decking, well heads, pilings, and debris), was described in the SLC 2002 Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), [SCH No. 2001021119]. The Department responded to the proposed project during the public review period (letter dated May 28, 2002). Our main concerns involved the loss of roosting and nesting habitat for California brown pelicans and Brandt's cormorants and the impacts to hard substrate and kelp from removal activities. The Department suggested a new roosting platform to provide in-kind, on-site mitigation, proportional to the impact of the project. Additionally, we preferred column toppling (a project alternative) to column removal as it would decrease impacts to hard-bottom habitat, kelp, and associated plant and animal communities, and would likely provide additional area for recruitment of kelp and associated fishes and invertebrates.

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The remnant structure removal and proposed seabird platform project information packet details the Year 2003 project description. As initially proposed in the DEIR, the topside decking and structures will be removed. However, the columns, initially slated to be removed and hauled away, will be toppled and will remain on the seafloor. Depending on how they land (an open versus closed configuration), the applicant will investigate the costs of additional quarry rock in opposition to a barge to move the columns to a preferable arrangement. Once the columns are in the desirable position, pile locations will be confirmed, the piles will be installed, and the topsides will be added. Quarry rock will be brought to the site and deposited. In addition to providing marine habitat, the rock would function to protect the piles. Finally, the interior well conductor will be trimmed to the level of the rock and capped. The number of pilings and the seabird platform(s) is conceptual and the final configuration will be coordinated with Department personnel.

Another project feature to the Year 2003 project description involves issuance of a SLC lease to the Department for continuing management of the site. The structure is designed to be as maintenance free as possible, however, some amount of maintenance funds are anticipated.

The Department believes the Year 2003 project description addresses our concerns of the loss of roosting and nesting habitat for California brown pelicans and Brandt's cormorants as well as our concerns involving impacts to hard-bottom habitat, kelp, and associated plant and animal communities. Furthermore, we agree that a lease issued to the Department for continued management of the site is appropriate and we are willing to enter into such a lease with the SLC.

We would like to thank the SLC for their continuing efforts concerning this project and we look forward to continued involvement in development of the structure. Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact Ms. Marilyn Fluharty, Environmental Scientist, California Department of Fish and Game, 4949 Viewridge Avenue, San Diego, CA 92123, telephone (858) 467-4231.

Sincerely,



ERIC J. LARSON,
Northern California Manager
Bays and Estuaries Ecosystem
Coordinator
Marine Region-Belmont

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cc: Ms. Deborah Johnston, Marine Region, Monterey
Ms. Marilyn Fluharty, Marine Region, San Diego
✓ Mr. Dwight Sanders, Chief
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